The Home Department

Conducted by Helen Watts McVey

Winter of the Heart

We did not fear them once—the dull gray mornings
No cheerless burden on our spirits laid;
The long night watches did not bring us warnings
That we were tenants of a house decayed.
The feathery snows like dreams to us descended,
The frost did fairy work on pane and bough;
Beauty and power and wonder have not ended—
How is it that we fear the winters now?

Alas, for us! The winter is within us;
Hard is the ice that cases close each heart;
Though worldly cares and vain regrets have won us,
To life's true heritage and better part.
Seasons and sky rejoice—yea, worship, rather,
While others toil and tremble e'en as we,
Hoping for harvests they will never gather,
Fearing the winters they may never see.

—M. B. Chapman in Argosy.

February

February is the month of birthdays. It is also possessed of a ground hog's day, and St. Valentine has the chair on the 14th. This year there is another distinction; we have an additional day—the 29th; this makes a difference in the whole year, which, because of this additional day, is called Leap Year, and as it confers special privileges on the feminine portion of humanity, the good looking, or eligible bachelors are kept guessing. The whole month is full of holidays, legal and social, and there is a chance for no end of fun from beginning until the end.

What is the Remedy?

How fast the time goes! It seems but a little while—a matter of weeks, at most—since we were sweltering in the fierce heat of the summertime; then the cool autumn washed out the remembrance of much of our suffering, bringing health and renewed vigor to the exhausted ones. And now we are just emerging from a season of almost unprecedented cold which covered the whole north country, extending far to the southward. The suffering was not confined wholly to the improvident and the unfortunate, but many who had carefully laid by in store for just such emergencies, found themselves at the mercy of the elements, and it was especially hard on the men, women and young people who were forced to go to and from their work through the bitter cold. Little children braved the storms on their way to and from schools, and anxious mothers watched them go with many misgivings.

Think of the conditions in the great cities, where thousands of "homeless men" were nightly housed in the basements of the municipal buildings, glad of a warm floor to lie down on, with perhaps their outer clothing for their pillow; clubs and charitable societies housed other thousands, and they were generally supplied with bread and coffee before being sent out for the day. Little was said of "homeless women." Here and there, mention was made that some woman's building or the Salvation Army had sheltered as many as possible; but there did not seem to be much attention paid to them—if there were any. But the daily papers freely advertised the fact that the city's indigent, improvident, shiftless, or unfortunate voters were cared for. And we wondered what of the helpless, homeless women?

Thousands of these homeless men say they would work if work was to be had; many of them doubtless tell the truth; but there are thousands of others who prefer the precarious life of the outcast. Meanwhile, there are thousands of householders who want help in various capacities, from the few-minutes job to steady employment; but they can not get it. These idle men refuse to do a small job unless paid out of all proportion to the value of the labor. I personally know of instances where these semblances of men, ragged, dirty, hungry, were taken in and cleaned, fed, clothed and given remunerative jobs about the homes of the well-to-do, where the work was anything but hard, and as soon as they got the bath, the clothes and a full stomach, made excuse to go on the street for a few minutes, and never came back. I am sorry to say that some women did the same. Thousands of families, when work is plenty and "times" good, live up to the last penny of their income, much or little, many of them going further still, and leaving a trail of unpaid bills behind them as they move from neighborhood to neighborhood, while their earnings are largely left with the saloon keeper or otherwise dissipated. When the stress of "no work" and freezing weather comes together upon them, those who have carefully kept within their incomes are called upon to spend their savings for the comfort of these ne'er-do-wells. It is the old, old story, and the solution of the problem seems as deep a mystery as it ever has been—how to teach these improvident people the lesson of thrift and of looking ahead for the quicksands of famine months.

Small Economies

Have you ever noticed that, after (never before) the butcher has weighed your purchase, he trims it, tossing the trimmings back on his table, or takes the bones out, giving you only the piece prepared for cooking? These trimmings are yours, paid for by you; and you should ask for and take them with you. The tough ends, odd scraps, and gristly pieces will make excellent broths and soups, and seasonings for vegetables. The bones contain nourishment, and they should be cracked and simmered a long time, with the scraps, and when cooked entirely done, the liquid strained from them and put into the stock jar. Take home the bits of fat and fry them out; save all drippings and thus get the worth of your money.

Whether using a cooked or raw ham, there comes a stage when no more neat trimmings can be cut from it. If a raw, salted ham, whether smoked or not, wash it well with a brush about the bone end and put it on in cold water over the fire, cooking it gently until tender. When about half done, put into the water several tablespoonfuls of vinegar and continue boiling—or simmering until done. Let lie in the water in the kettle until the water is cold, then remove the skin, take every bit of meat from the bone, throwing away the gristles, and put the meat through a chopper, or chop quite fine; to each pint of the chopped meat allow a gill of nice stock (or of the gravy in the kettle), one tablespoonful of dry mustard, a scant half-teaspoonful of tobasco pepper and two beaten eggs; put the mixture in a double boiler and cook for five minutes, then use for spreading sandwiches for the children's school lunches.

If the ham is a fresh ham, the bone can be used to boil with vegetables, such as cabbage, potatoes, turnips, and will season the dish as well as a piece of fresh meat. Or the bone can be treated as the salt ham, and made for sandwich filling.

To Varnish Linoleum

If the linoleum is the inlaid kind, it will look well as long as there is a piece of it, as the colors go clear through, while the painted grades will wear off and look very unsightly, though they may still be serviceable. After the linoleum has been on the floor for sometime, it will have spread all it is going to, and should be fastened down with regular linoleum tacks, which are double pointed, one point being for each edge, across a joining. A quarter-round over the edges next the wall will keep the outer edge in place. About once in six months get the regular floor oil-cloth varnish, and if not thin enough to spread on easily with a brush, thin it with turpentine until it will flow smoothly. Varnish the linoleum after supper, and it will harden over night. The linoleum must be washed clean with clear warm water and dried before applying the varnish. Get a quick-drying varnish; there are several excellent ones costing at most not more than twenty-five cents a can. One can should varnish an ordinary-sized kitchen.

For Staining the Floor

One of the most durable stains known, and not at all expensive, for either kitchen or dining room, is made and applied as follows: Have the floor perfectly clean, well scrubbed and dried, and for the averaged sized room, get one-fourth ounce of permanganate of potash, add to a quart of water and apply quickly to the floor, using a flat brush; repeat the process until as dark as you want it. When dry, go over it with one or two coats of boiled linseed oil and turpentine, in proportion of two ounces of turpentine to a quart of the oil, stirring well. Let the first coat dry before applying the second, and it will pay you to apply the second coat. After drying, there will be no more scrubbing necessary, but it can be wiped up with clear water and a cloth, drying with another cloth.

Common Salt

Physiologists have discovered that more than one-half the saline matter of the blood is made up of common salt. The constant discharge of this matter renders it imperative that man and beast should constantly seek new supplies, and they are urged to this by the uncontrollable desire for this element. Although it is usually regarded merely as a flavor, it is of the utmost importance to the human economy. It is said that in the middle ages, criminals and heretics were fed on saltless foods, with the result that they perished miserably in long-drawn-out agony. It is also claimed that certain races of savage people not only never use salt, but hold it in the utmost abhorrence; the chemist explains this by proving the presence of liberal quantities of salt in the food they eat and the water they drink. It is the function of salt to supply the juices of the stomach with the amount of hydrochloric acid they require; soda also is contained in these juices, and both elements of sodium chloride (so the chemists term common salt) are indispensible in supplying a healthy body with the requisite quantity of inorganic matter. The excessive use of salted meats is very injurious to the human body; but the cause for this is in the meats which are injuriously affected by excessive salt. The harm done consists in robbing the meat not only of its fluids, but also of the very constituents that the human body needs for its preservation; vegetables containing potash salts and but little common salt are then needed to repair the ravages the body has suffered, as in scurvey. We can not thrive on foods robbed of its invaluable potash.—Medical Magazine.

Using Corn Meal

As simple as the cooking of corn meal mush, or hasty pudding is, there are many women who frankly say they can not make it fit to eat. The whole secret lies in having the water salted and boiling before putting in the meal, and adding the meal in such a manner that there shall be no lumps, then cooking the mush until it is done. Have the meal sifted, and moisten it with cold water, wetting it thoroughly, then, stir it spoonful at a time into the boiling water, stirring as you drop it in; continue this until all the meal is used, then let it cook a few minutes, stirring vigorously, after which it should be pulled back from the fire and allowed to bubble gently, now and then giving it a good stirring. Cook it thus for half an hour, and you will find it very appetizing. The mush should not be so thick as to be stiff, but should be thin enough to stir easily. If it is wanted for frying at the next meal, make it thicker than for eating with milk or sauce, pour into a square pan and let cool; then, for frying, slice and drop into smoking hot lard, and cook until a nice brown.

A good recipe for bread is to use one egg, well beaten; one tablespoonful of white flour, two or more cupfuls of buttermilk, as the quantity to be made calls for, one teaspoonful of salt, one teaspoonful (level) of soda to two cupfuls of milk, if the milk is very sour; less, if the milk is fresh and sweet; then stir into the mixture enough sifted corn meal to make a pouring batter, pour into well greased tins and bake in a hot oven. More eggs may be used, and are an improvement. The quantity of soda or meal can not be given, as the amount of soda depends upon the sourness of the milk, while some meal "swells" more than others, and absorbs more moisture. Try small batches at first, and when you "get the hang" of it, you will be glad you learned.

Fixing Over-Frayed Garments

Instead of throwing away a garment because of frayed edges, worn linings, and other signs of usage, look the garment over and see what it needs and proceed to work renovating. If buttons are missing, do not sew on "any old thing," odds and